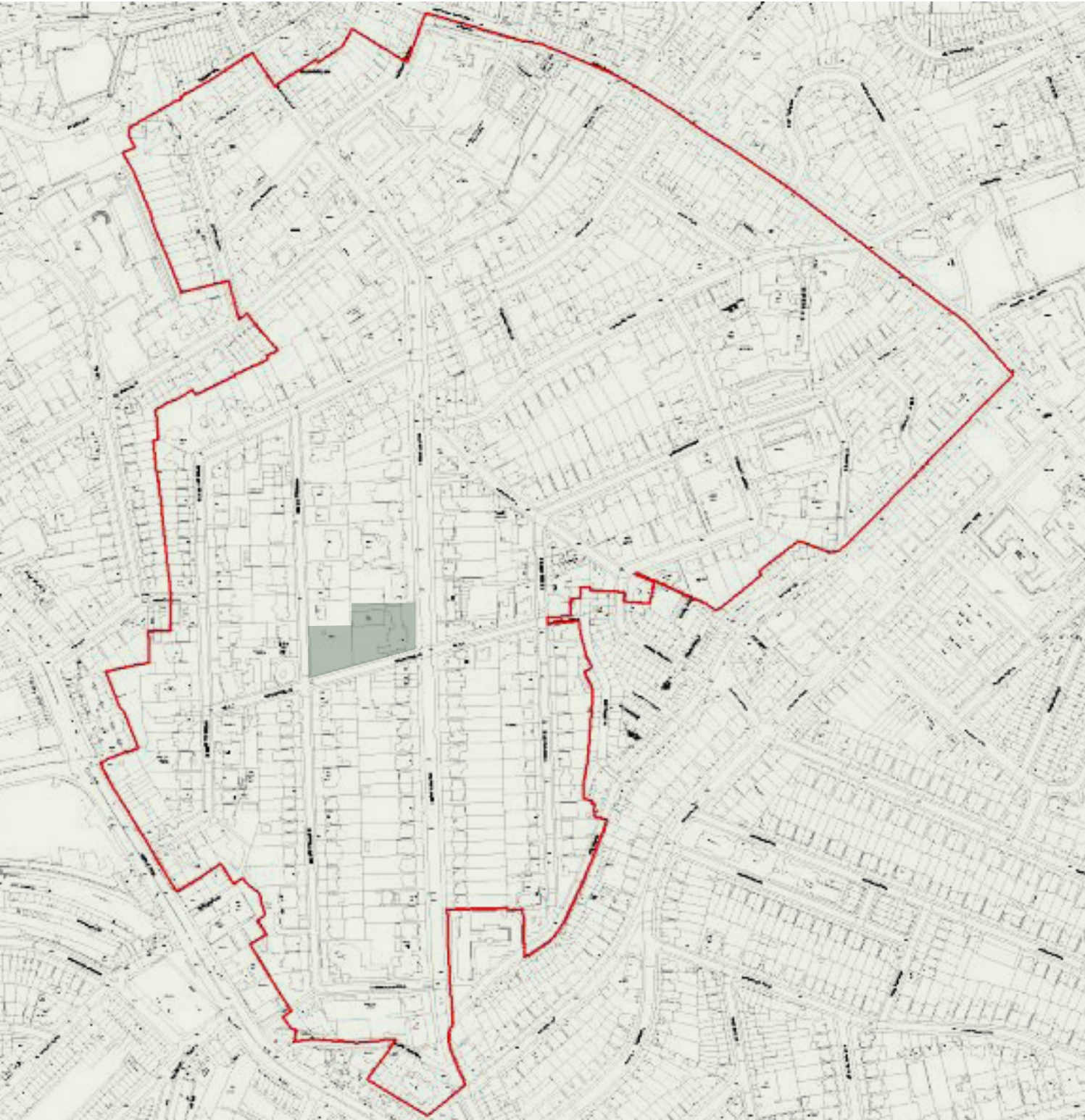


Understanding the location

Understanding the location

The Fitzjohn's and Netherhall Conservation Area



The Fitzjohn's / Netherhall Conservation Area map with the Wider Site highlighted near its centre

Statutory context of the Wider Site

The Site and Wider Site are located within ‘Sub-Area 1’ of the Fitzjohn’s and Netherhall Conservation Area which was first designated in 1984. Development within the area is reviewed in respect of a Character Appraisal and Management Plan, the latest revision of which was adopted by the London Borough of Camden in December 2022. The Planning Statement submitted to accompany this report sets out this statutory context in greater detail.

The street layout of the Conservation Area is dominated by the south-north spine of Fitzjohn’s Avenue, and by the parallel streets that lay to its east and west and include Maresfield Gardens and Daleham Gardens. The older, less orthogonal roads of Finchley Road and Hampstead High Street / Rosslyn Hill form the west and east boundaries of the Conservation Area respectively.

The urban grain of the Conservation Area primarily comprises large detached or semi-detached houses with generous front and rear gardens. Gaps between the buildings provide views of verdant gardens that, along with grass verges and rows of trees lining some streets, contribute to the area’s leafy and suburban character. The Conservation Area contains an eclectic mix of residential architecture in styles that include: Gothic, classical Italianate, Queen Anne Revival, Jacobean, Domestic Revival, and Arts and Crafts.

Understanding the location

Initial patterns of development

Fitzjohn's Avenue & surrounding streets

Prior to the mid-19th century, the Wider Site and its surrounding neighbourhood was agricultural fields on the slopes south of Hampstead Village. The land belonged to Sir Thomas Maryon of Hampstead Manor. During the 19th century the construction of Finchley Road (1827), and the residential development of St John's Wood nearby motivated Sir Thomas's brother and heir, Sir John, to grant building leases for the land. In 1873 he decided to divide the development of the estate with his son Spencer.

The development of Fitzjohn's Avenue in 1875 by Spencer Wilson marked the first phase of planned development in the area. The surrounding neighbourhood was laid out over the ten years following 1876. Netherhall Gardens and Maresfield Gardens were named after a manor and parish of the Maryon Wilson estate in Sussex. These adjoining streets were slightly less spacious than Fitzjohn's Avenue but all had large building plots with detached or semi-detached properties, and some had room for carriage drives.

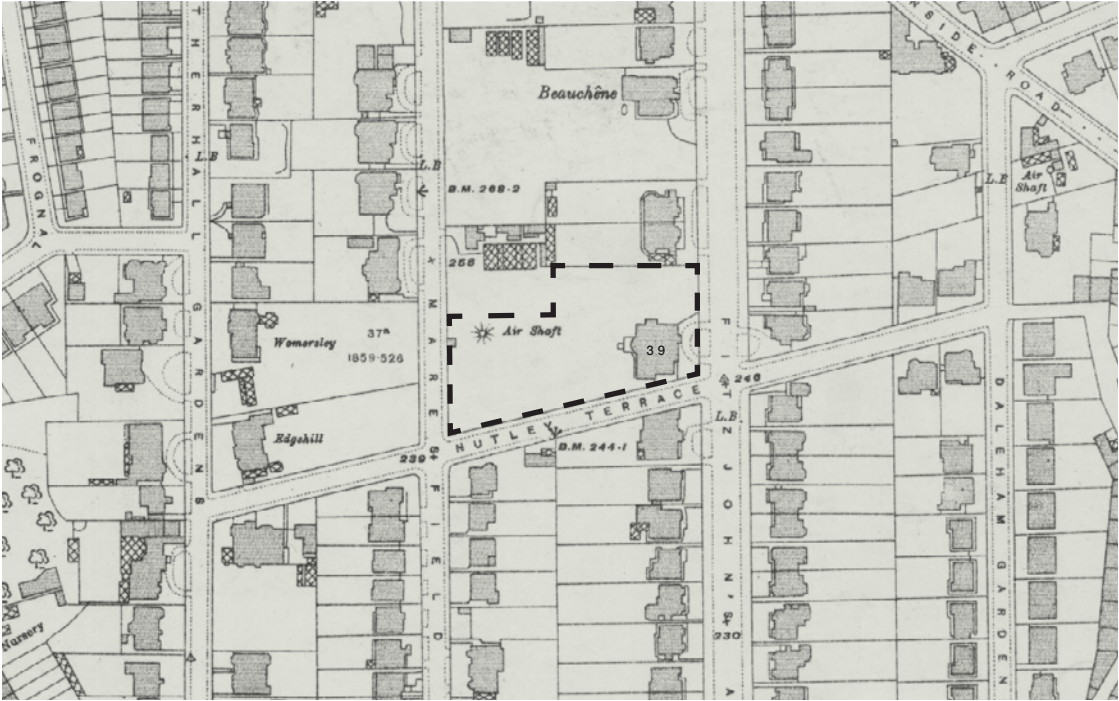
The layout of the neighbourhood was influenced by two subterranean railway tunnels. The northern end of Netherhall Gardens was designed to lie over the North London Railway Tunnel built in 1860, and Nutley Terrace was laid over the line of the Belsize (railway) Tunnel built in 1865. Together this collection of south-north axial streets and the roads (and rail tunnels) that traversed them created a grid of six urban blocks.



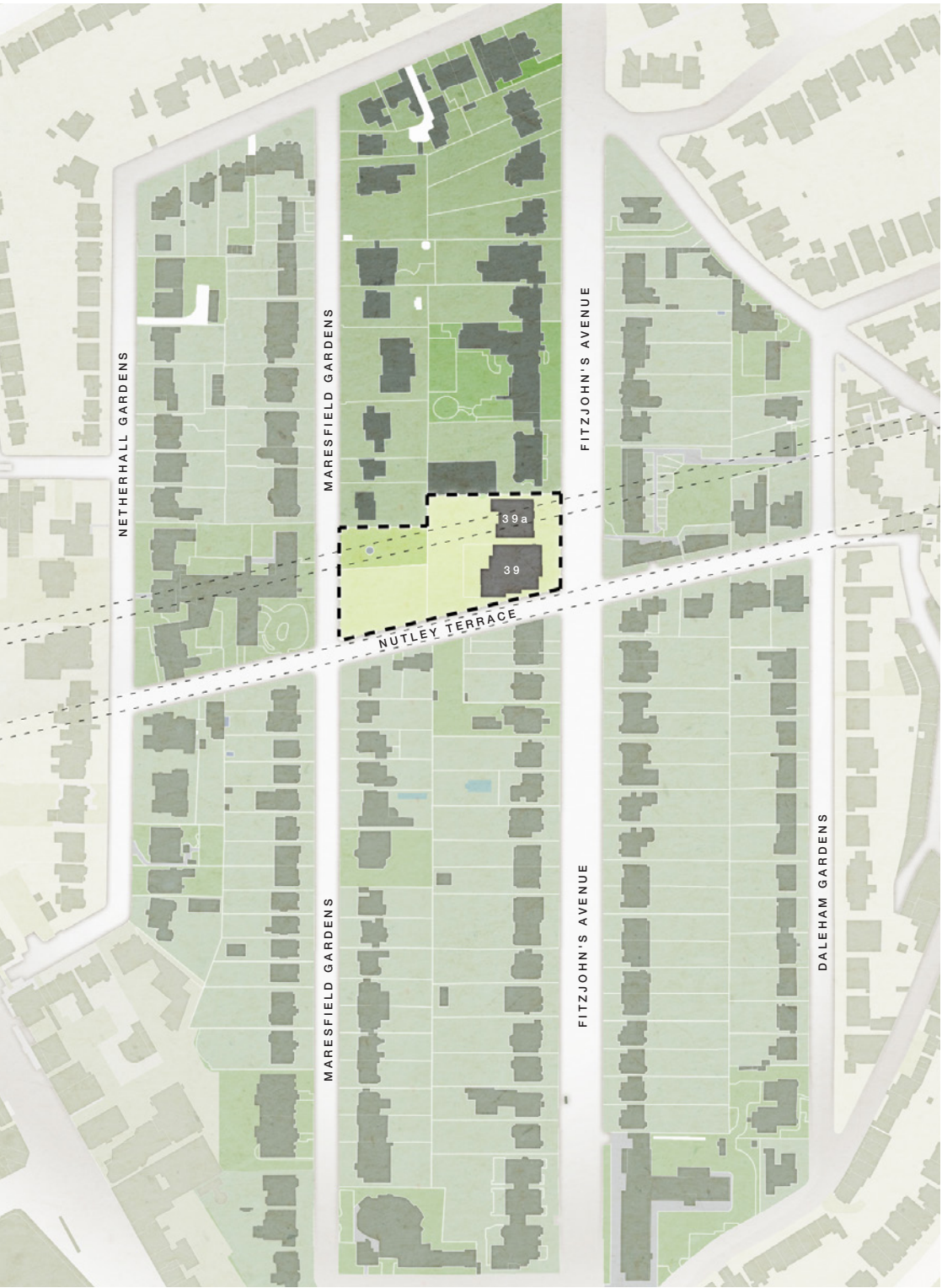
Historical photograph of Fitzjohn's Avenue in 1915



1871 Ordnance Survey extract showing the Wider Site as agricultural field with the development of the Belsize Tunnel to its south



1915 Ordnance Survey extract showing the development of the Fitzjohn's neighbourhood, with regular plots south of Nutley Terrace and larger plots to its north that include the Wider Site



Location plan showing the Wider Site in the context of the six blocks of 19th century development

Understanding the location

Initial patterns of development

Corner plots

Since the development plots and underlying railways are not perpendicular to one another, neither where the resulting intersections with Fitzjohn's Avenue. In some cases, the non-orthogonal corners of these urban blocks are occupied by houses with special, atypical, relationships to adjacent streets.

The houses at 61 Fitzjohn's Avenue and 16 Netherhall Gardens feature side or secondary elevations that are aligned to the angle of the rail tunnels. Their primary elevations tilt away from the axial roads, creating more generous open spaces adjacent to the street. In the situation of 61 Fitzjohn's Avenue, this also enables the building to intelligently reveal other, longer established, street patterns. The house signals both the acute angle of Akenside Road approaching from its west, and the eventual angle of Fitzjohn's Avenue as it enters Hampstead Village to the north. This value of this gesture was reinforced by the subsequent angle of numbers 57 and 59 Fitzjohn's Avenue.

The Grade II listed house at 61 Fitzjohn's Avenue is a valued asset in the Conservation Area since it is also the work of the highly respected architect Richard Norman Shaw. Like many houses north of Nutley Terrace it was commissioned by an owner-occupier. Freeholds for plots on this steeper section of hill north of the Belsize Tunnel, were sold in what appears, in historical maps, to be a strategic change from the pattern of speculative development to its south. This period of building also saw the construction of the house at 39 Fitzjohn's Avenue.



Location plan showing the Site in the context of the six blocks of 19th century development

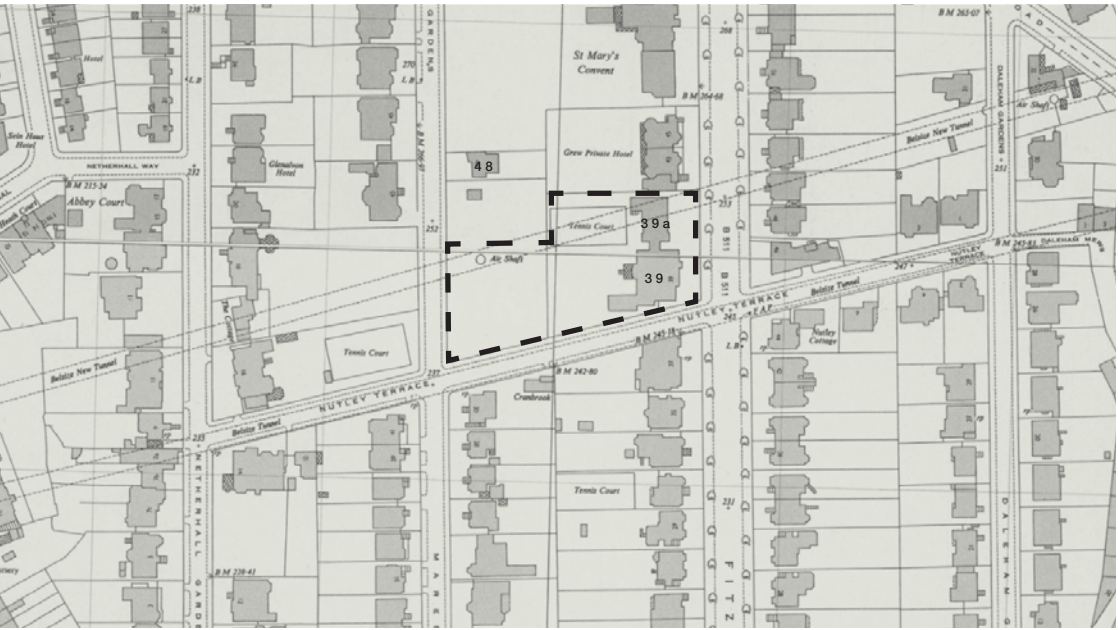


Photograph of the house at 61 Fitzjohn's Avenue set back and at an angle to the street behind a deep garden

Institutions & subdivision of plots

Due to the prestige and size of the houses built, institutions were attracted to relocate to the area and took on properties that appear to have been proving unsustainable to maintain as single private residences. Examples of institutions that relocated includes several girls' schools (a trend which continues today) and religious organisations such as the 'Trustees of the Roman Catholic Purposes' that occupied 39 Fitzjohn's Avenue from 1937. Their charity handed ownership on to the Jesuit Order, who subsequently extended the original house with the contiguous property at 39a.

Plots in the urban block of the Wider Site were notable for their length. Land fronting Maresfield Gardens became the rear end of extremely large gardens for properties on Fitzjohn's Avenue. Much as the houses had before them, the scale of these gardens appears to have made their upkeep unsustainable. Around 1952 the Jesuit Order, then occupying number 39 Fitzjohn's Avenue as 'Southall House', sold off the north-western corner of its land which had previously housed its stables and garden buildings. The construction of 48 Maresfield Gardens on this land initiated a new phase and pattern of development in this corner of the Conservation Area.



1955 Ordnance Survey extract showing infill development with the enlargement of 39 and addition of 39a Fitzjohn's Avenue on the Wider Site, and 48 Maresfield Gardens appearing to the west

Understanding the location

Evolving patterns of development

Twentieth century appearance of Maresfield Gardens

The eastern side of Maresfield Gardens, north of its junction with Nutley Terrace (numbers 46-72), has a unique history of ad hoc development of green sites that spans the latter part of the 20th century. This pattern began in 1939 with the Grade II listed Modernist house at number 48, but has since evolved to prefer variations of Queen Anne pastiche. Their sequence of setbacks away from the highway also creates a distinct undulation in the block’s morphology.

The wide plot of number 52 Maresfield Gardens is set furthest back from its boundary. To its north and south the placement of houses gradually shifts, from one to another, back to the predominant building line established by 19th century houses south of Nutley Terrace. This places an accent not only on the centrality of number 52, but also upon the most peripheral plots on this stretch of Maresfield Gardens. These respectively comprise an amalgamated view of 72 Maresfield Gardens and 42 Netherhall Gardens to the north; and the land adjacent to 46 Maresfield Gardens to the south.

In the south of this composition, the plot of 46 Maresfield Gardens is, like number 48, a further and later subdivision of the land of 39 Fitzjohn’s Avenue. On its south edge number 46 stops short of the loosely defined roadway on the Site which is accessed from Maresfield Gardens and used by Network Rail operatives to service the Site’s railway tunnel vent. Number 46 has an easement to use this roadway for accessing garages on its south elevation.

The roadway and the vent are themselves in service of a third subterranean railway tunnel built in 1884. Development that might have concluded this stretch of Maresfield Gardens was constrained by the presence of the vent. This constraint was compounded significantly by the trees that subsequently grew up around the vent and on the boundaries of the Site.

Public & private trees

Whether growing in the public realm or in private gardens, large trees play a prominent role in shaping impressions of the Conservation Area. When it was first laid out, Fitzjohn’s Avenue’s grandeur was accentuated by the alternating planting of red and white flowering chestnuts along the edge of its wide pavements. The east side of the southern section of Maresfield Gardens emulated its neighbour with trees lining its smaller pavement.

Elsewhere, trees in the ‘Gardens’ streets of Maresfield (north of Nutley Terrace), Netherhall and Daleham characterise the public realm from within private land. Trees growing on private land are particularly dominant in the 20th century composition of Maresfield Gardens north of Nutley Terrace. Their stature and significance here is likely due to the fact many of them pre-date the properties that now own them. A further reading of historical maps suggests that the houses in the centre of the street were pushed back by these trees, rather than by their designers. This situation is perhaps best illustrated by the large front garden and unusually small back garden at number 52 Maresfield Gardens.

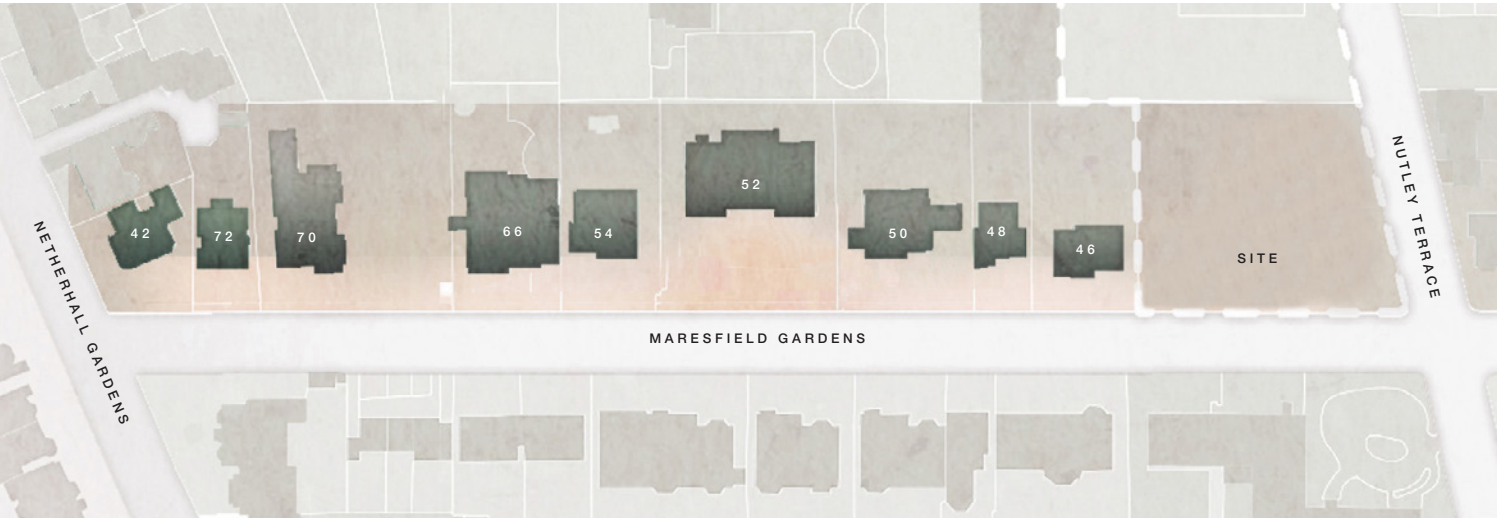


Diagram showing the sequence of set backs creating a unique composition to buildings on the east side of Maresfield Gardens north of Nutley Terrace



Photograph showing prominent trees on the pavements of Fitzjohn's Avenue



Photograph showing prominent trees on private land off Maresfield Gardens

Understanding the location

Street hierarchy & building lines

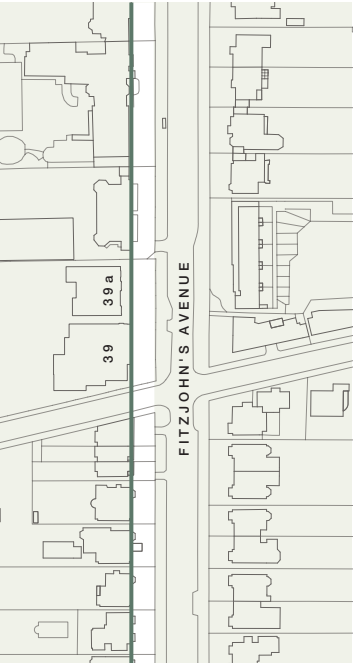


Diagram showing a 9.2m building line set back



Mature trees lining both pavements conceal properties from the wide road of Fitzjohn's Avenue

Fitzjohn's Avenue

Fitzjohn's Avenue lies immediately east of the Wider Site and provides access to both 39 and 39a Fitzjohn's Avenue. It is described in Camden's Conservation Area Appraisal as "the most prominent street in the area". It was planned to be grand, with the road set at 50ft wide and lined by 10ft wide pavements and runs almost precisely south to north.

The initial phase of large 19th century houses was built in a Queen Anne revivalist style, to a very high quality with many decorative architectural details. These houses are set back from the public realm behind low brick wall boundaries. Interspersed with these buildings are twentieth century Modernist apartment blocks that adopt a similar material palette on their plainer façades. The regimented rhythm of the now mature trees lining the pavements continue to play a significant role in the status of the avenue.

On the west side of Fitzjohn's Avenue (adjacent to the Wider Site) buildings are deeply set back and in line with one another. In this setting 39a is notably diminutive since it is the only building in either its own block or the block to its south to be recessed further back than any of its neighbours. It also has an atypically plain façade (that is not Modernist in style).



Wide plots of 47, 49 and 51 Fitzjohn's Avenue



Pattern book designs of 40 and 38 Fitzjohn's Avenue

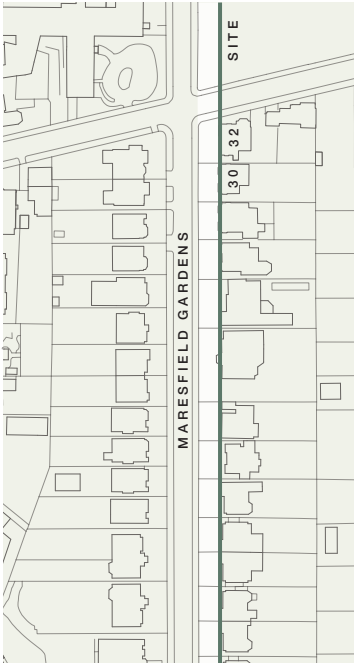


Diagram showing a 9.2m building line set back



Photograph showing trees prominent on the east pavement of Maresfield Gardens south of Nutley Terrace

Maresfield Gardens (south of Nutley Terrace)

Maresfield Gardens lies immediately west of the Site. Running south to north and perpendicular to Fitzjohn's Avenue its initial, southern, section was modelled after its grander neighbour. The road and pavements widths are far narrower than those of Fitzjohn's Avenue, but houses are of a similar quality albeit at a smaller scale.

Plots are regularly scaled, and houses typically set back from the pavement to a similar depth as those on Fitzjohn's Avenue. Trees are prominent in the public realm on the eastern side of the street but feature more intermittently, and usually from within private gardens, on its western side.



Photograph showing pattern book designs of numbers 32 / 28



Semi-detached houses of 27 and 29 Maresfield Gardens

Understanding the location

Street hierarchy & building lines



Photograph showing the relaxed atmosphere and rising road bounded by walls and trees on Maresfield Gardens



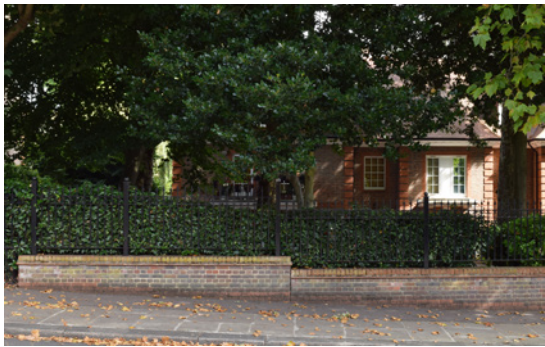
Photograph showing the wide open plot of number 49



Photograph showing the blocks at the south of the street



Photograph showing mature trees adjacent to number 48



Photograph showing the concealed property at number 52

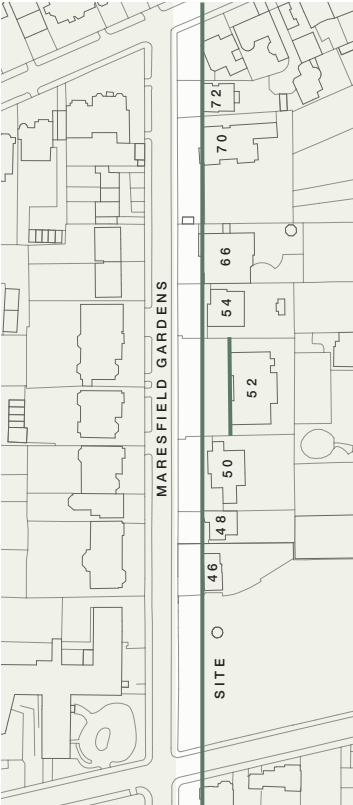


Diagram showing the min. 9.2m / max. 19.7m building line set backs

Maresfield Gardens (north of Nutley Terrace)

For reasons previously described in this report the morphology of the steeper northern section of Maresfield Gardens is more diverse, and uniquely so in the Conservation Area. The western side of the street was developed first with substantial detached houses that occupy large plots with wide frontages to the street. Houses are not set back quite far as those on adjacent streets, and trees are starkly absent from the pavement.

The most southern end of this street elevation was not built upon at the same time as plots to the north. This is most likely owing to the presence of the Belsize New Tunnel beneath. This corner is now occupied by a crude orthogonal building of two connected blocks that both run parallel to the road. One block sits on the historical building line. It is connected by a lower mass to the second block sitting three and a half times further back. Impressions of their site are dominated by the large trees along its boundary, and which enclose a large vehicle forecourt.

On the eastern side of the street, directly north of the Site, the small Modernist house at number 48 adopted the historical building line of its older neighbours south of Nutley Terrace. It appears to have inherited the unconstrained land of outbuildings to 39 Fitzjohn's Avenue. Large mature trees stand wall-like at its boundary with number 50 to the north. Similarly imposing trees mark the private boundaries of number 54. Together these two properties project a woodland-like atmosphere in the street.

The shifting set back of houses from the pavement adds to the overall impression of casualness, as well as to an explicit atmosphere of privacy. Domestic activity is veiled by boundaries of wall, railing, and hedge and behind large forecourts. Compared with number 48, number 52 is twice the distance from the pavement. Properties at numbers 50 and 54 Maresfield Gardens are set somewhere between these two respective building lines and produce the neatly concave morphology described in this report.

Understanding the location

Street hierarchy & building lines



Photograph showing the informal character of Nutley Terrace with properties in close proximity of the street on the south side and trees of the Site to the north



Nutley Terrace

Nutley Terrace lies directly south of, and along the longest edge of, the Wider Side. Nutley Terrace is amongst the least planned and most informal of the streets in the neighbourhood - and as the Area Appraisal notes this is “perhaps due to concerns about structures over the [Belsize Tunnel] railway line”. Nutley Terrace serves predominantly as a convenient lateral connection between Fitzjohn’s Avenue and parallel streets, and as a place for parking vehicles.

Since it seems more a product of circumstances (such as the topography and the railway tunnel) rather than of design, Nutley Terrace is sparsely built up. The street predominantly features the flanks or garden boundaries of houses that address the Avenue and Gardens roads that bisect it. The resulting atmosphere is modest and episodic, and it offers an unfussy, calm relief from the axial roads that is recognised as a special asset in Camden’s Conservation Area Appraisal.

The southern flank of 39 Fitzjohn’s Avenue is stepped along the street edge with a narrow margin from the pavement. This margin is repeated by its recently approved rear extension into the Wider Site. On both sides of the street, buildings with more active frontage than number 39 share a set back twice this depth, but it is still only two-thirds that of the set back by houses on Fitzjohn’s Avenue.

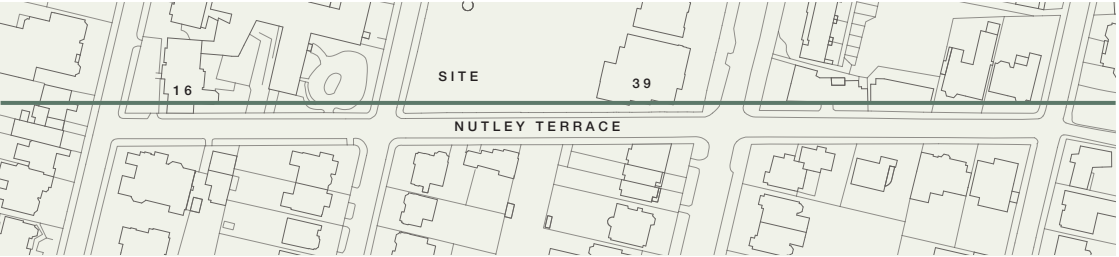


Diagram showing an approximate 6m set back building line

Understanding the location

Building heights & natural topography

Symmetry & impact of Fitzjohn’s Avenue

As described in this report, the neighbourhood surrounding the Site was developed on the slopes south of Hampstead Village. The consistent four and five storey building heights on Fitzjohn’s Avenue offer a congruous reference of the rising ground that is described by Camden’s Conservation Area Appraisal as having an “impact” that is “powerful”.

Asymmetry & distortion on Maresfield Gardens

Maresfield Gardens tracks the very same slope as Fitzjohn’s Avenue, and the consistent four storey height of houses on its west side present a stepped roofscape like that seen on Fitzjohn’s Avenue. Despite these similarities, the atmosphere on Maresfield Gardens is quite different. Without a mirroring roofscape on the east side of the road, the topography does not have the same “impact”.

The ensemble of houses on the east side of the road are between two and three storeys high and, as previously described, often well hidden behind their boundaries. This has a disruptive effect on how building heights are perceived. With only glimpses of the shorter buildings north of the Site to compare, these houses feel as imposing as their taller neighbours south of Nutley Terrace. Their roof lines, thanks to the rising ground, do share a similar datum.

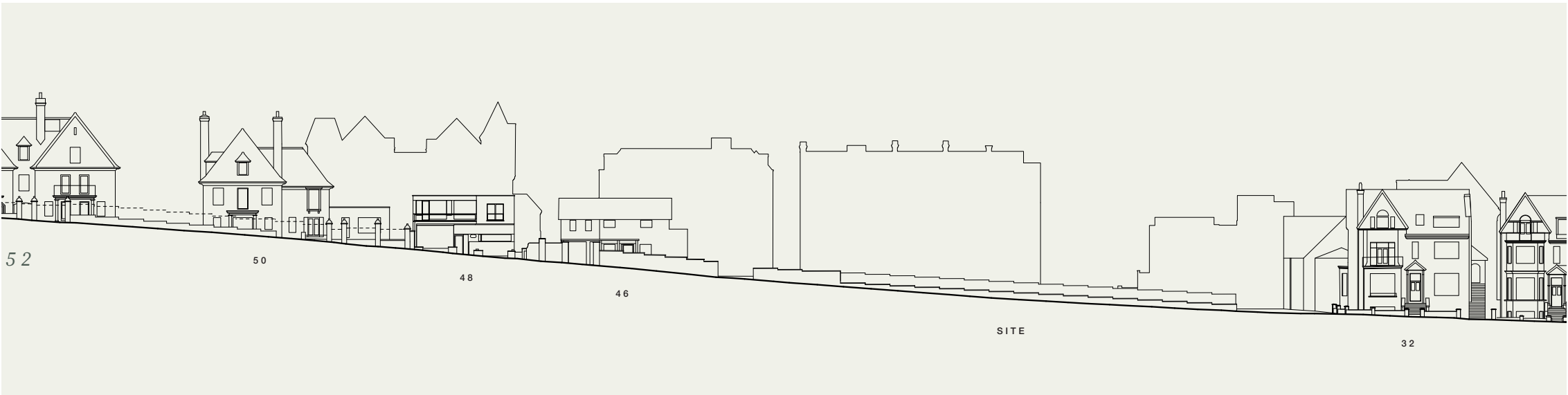
When standing outside number 54 Maresfield Gardens, the impact of the Wider Site is diminished, particularly as the view down towards it is largely populated by the denser grain of properties south of Nutley Terrace.

Eclectic roofscape

Camden’s Conservation Area Appraisal highlights that “roofs are an important and conspicuous element [of the area], a development of mid-late Victorian architecture that dominates the profile of the skyline. The most common types of roof are gables (various designs), pitches with dormers, shallow pitched with overhanging eaves.” Furthermore, the roofscape is also dotted with mansards, chimneys, rooflights and plant equipment. The silhouettes of these elements appear all-the-more irregular for being on individual roofs of different detached or semi-detached properties.



Street elevation of the west side of Fitzjohn's Avenue with numbers 39 and 39a at its centre, showing the regular building heights rising with the slope and with significant variation in the forms of roofs



Street elevation of Maresfield Gardens with the Site at its centre showing the contrasting roofs and the rising slop which places shorter houses to the north on a similar datum to larger houses to the south

Understanding the location
Building heights & natural topography



'VP06' Accurate Visual Representation (AVR) showing the various building heights on the shallow gradient of the topography looking west from Fitzjohn's Avenue onto Nutley Terrace (credit: RockHunter)



'VP02' Accurate Visual Representation (AVR) showing the falling ground and apparent lack of a distinct roof-line looking south on Maresfield Gardens towards Nutley Terrace

Understanding the location

Material selection & expression



Diagram showing an outline survey of the array of brick colours used in the Fitzjohn's neighbourhood

Clay & colour

Clay provides a cohesive framework to all the experiments in form and ornament in the Conservation Area. As in many parts of London, ancient geology manifests itself today (in a fired form) in brick construction. Crucially, the predominance of this one material does not translate into a visual consistency in the colour or expressions of brickwork.

Observation and mapping reveal a rich tapestry of colours and experimentation with colour occurring between streets, neighbours, and even pattern-book and mirrored designs on Fitzjohn's Avenue. The colours used vary between bright terracotta, dark red, both deep and pale browns, violets, and various shades of grey. Features such as lintels and string courses are usually highlighted with contrasting bricks.

Red brick neighbours appear shoulder to shoulder with numbers 39 and 39a at the east end of the Wider Site. At its west end on Maresfield Gardens the expressions are more varied, owing to its different periods of development south and then north of Nutley Terrace. Houses south of the Site are predominantly built with muted red bricks. To the north of the Site it is more common to see warm brown brick with red accents appearing on windows and corner quoins, such as on the elevations of the houses between numbers 50 to 70. In this setting the grey Modernist house of number 48 and the more recent, bright red pastiche house at number 72 appear to be incongruous with their neighbours.



Photograph of brick colours on neighbours at numbers 7 and 9 Fitzjohn's Avenue



Photograph of the brown brickwork of number 47 Maresfield Gardens with bright red accents and ornament



Photograph of brick colours and alternatively coloured ornaments on neighbours at numbers 58 and 56 Fitzjohn's Avenue

Understanding the location

Material selection & expression

Historical expressions

The 19th century architectural styles of individual detached and semi-detached houses in the Conservation Area share a range of common features that appear in various configurations. These include elements of their roofs, and motifs on their elevations such as bays, porches, gables, and modulated or faceted façades. This variety is diversified further by a plethora of careful detailing. This includes finely rubbed brickwork, terracotta mouldings, elegant wrought iron work, twisted brickwork chimneys, glazed tiling, hanging tiles, Oriel windows, stained glass, stone window mullions, and large studio windows for artist clients.



Photographs of examples on Netherhall Gardens and Maresfield Gardens of (from left to right); the 45 degree projection of a corner window bay; large porches; faceted bay to provide external terrace; and neatly framed and stacked windows within a field of brickwork

Brick & tile relief on Maresfield Gardens

Many houses on Maresfield Gardens demonstrate a particular effort distinguish the upper portion of their elevations. On the older 19th century houses ornament and texture is introduced variously in the form of fish tail and club tile patterns or painted half-timbered panels and elaborately moulded stucco. On the more contemporary building styles north of Nutley Terrace these moments are expressed with brickwork and creasing tiles that are more flush with the facade. Elevations on these buildings are also framed by the relief of large corner quoins in the brickwork.



Hung tiles providing texture and accent on the acute pitch of mansard roof to number 25 Maresfield Gardens



Stucco provides a frieze of texture at the ridge of the roof to number 32 Maresfield Gardens



Brick quoins express the corner of number 70 Maresfield Gardens with the appearance of two columns supporting the roof

Understanding the location

Material selection & expression



Archive view of the demolished 'monumental' brick elevation of Severn House to Maresfield Gardens, previously on the site of 42 Netherhall Gardens

Legacy of monumentality on Maresfield Gardens

The distinct ensemble of houses on the east side, of the northern end, of Maresfield Gardens adopt a different but just as striking attitude to ornament. Theirs is a shared language of monumentality – a strictness with ornament (and its conscious omission) that is largely constrained to changes of colour and light relief around window openings, ridgelines and at building corners. Interestingly, this approach provides common ground between the divergent styles of Modernism seen at number 48, and the respectively unrefined pastiche seen at number 72. This collective attitude appears to resonate from before any of these houses were built, back to when the site at 42 Netherhall Gardens at the most northern end of the road was occupied by Severn House.



Photograph of the Grade II listed house at number 48 noted in its listing for elegant detailing and restrained simplicity

Severn House was a large five-story property designed by Richard Norman Shaw in 1888. The house had elevations (and an attitude to brickwork) that Andrew Saint describes in his monograph on Norman Shaw as “plain but monumental” and which “belong to the story of Shaw’s stylistic transition in the late 1880s”. Number 48 was built in 1939, when Severn House was still standing. Its listing describes a successful blend of "English sensibilities with...Viennese modernism" and "elegant detailing and use of materials which sets restrained simplicity against bespoke fittings introducing colour, pattern and texture". Though Severn House has long since been demolished the heritage of what it established remains pertinent on Maresfield Gardens today.



Amalgamated view of the mass of brick elevation on 72 Maresfield Gardens and 42 Netherhall Gardens now on the site of Severn House



Brickwork is only interrupted by window openings and corner quoins in the design pattern of number 54 (shared by numbers 50 and 52)

Understanding the location

Boundaries & thresholds

Economy & order on Fitzjohn's Avenue

Along Fitzjohn's Avenue, politely detailed garden walls step gently with the run of the hill on Fitzjohn's Avenue. Many of these walls are low and defer attention onto the façades of houses that are neatly aligned behind them. The special moments of steps and openings in the wall are marked by taller piers.

The eastern wall of the Wider Site is set in this context and contributes to the collective decorum. It is also a valuable example of an economical approach to building boundaries that was common in the 19th century. Over-fired, vitrified 'clinker' bricks that would have otherwise been rejected from the kilns were mortared into decorative panels, framed with higher quality brickwork, and capped with stone copings. Very similar designs can also be seen in the neighbouring properties of 47 and 49 Maresfield Gardens.

In all three of these situations the low boundary walls enclose open forecourts scaled to receive carriages and accessed via wide ungated openings flanked by piers. Such permeability between the public and private realms is not common since neighbouring walls are topped by wrought iron railings and their openings enclosed by matching gates.



The Wider Site's low wall to Fitzjohn's Avenue is simply detailed and uses burnt 'clinker' bricks as ornament



Low and modestly detailed bricks step with the fall of the slope on Fitzjohn's Avenue where railings or hedge supplement the protection of private domains with views of planting

Sergison
Bates
architects

Vestiges of an older heritage

Tall boundary walls are an idiosyncratic element of Hampstead. In the 17th century, the small settlement of Hampstead sat in the open landscape of Hampstead Heath and the slopes that became the Fitzjohn's neighbourhood. Its elevated position imbued it with a picturesque tranquillity, but also exposed it to harsher weather, bandits, and highwaymen (including the infamous Dick Turpin). To safely benefit from this privileged setting, manor houses were often protected by high walls with narrow pedestrian openings that were secured with solid gates. Many of these walls, such as those seen on Holly Walk, Holy Hill, Mount Vernon and Frognal remain in the foreground of Hampstead Village today.

In some special instances references of this 17th century heritage and the deeper historical roots enhance the setting of the Conservation Area. At the Grade II listed house of 61 Fitzjohn's Avenue its architect, Richard Norman Shaw, laid out a large garden at the street's edge. The garden is protected from the bustle of Fitzjohn's Avenue by a high quality, tall brick wall. Archive photographs show this wall's design was repeated at the opposite corner of the urban block around (the now demolished) Severn House.

The tall boundary walls of the neighbouring houses at numbers 3 and 5 Lyndhurst Terrace are also high-quality evocations of the spirit of Hampstead Village. Coupled with tree branches reaching above, and climbing plants hanging over, these walls also imply that they are restraining and protecting dense gardens behind.



The high quality wall designed by Richard Norman Shaw at 61 Fitzjohn's Avenue references the tradition of 17th century walls in Hampstead village



Extract from John Rocque's map from 1746 shows the village of Hampstead and the enclosed gardens of large houses spreading to the north, west and east



Evocative tall boundary walls leading onto Shepherd's Path protect the plots of numbers 3 and 5 Lyndhurst Terrace